

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20502

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]

April 8, 1986

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR JOHN M. POINDEXTER

FROM: OLIVER L. NORTH  
HOWARD R. TEICHER  
JAMES R. STARK

SUBJECT: Next Steps: Libya

Attached at Tab I for your signature is a memorandum for the President for the subject meeting. The agenda is at Tab A. Themes for your use are at Tab B.

RECOMMENDATION

That you sign the memo at Tab I and draw from the themes at Tab B.

Approve \_\_\_\_\_

Disapprove \_\_\_\_\_

Attachments

Tab I Memorandum to the President  
Tab A Agenda  
Tab B Themes

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DECLASSIFIED IN PART  
NLS F95-023/1 #652  
By AMK NARA Date 1/18/05

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958

As Amended

Sec. 1.4c

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ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: JOHN M. POINDEXTER

SUBJECT: Next Steps: Libya

Issue

To reach agreement on the timing and key aspects of U.S. actions against Libya. An agenda for the meeting is at Tab A.

Background

As on Monday I have invited George Shultz, Bill Casey, Will Taft and Admiral Crowe to join us at 9:30 for a discussion of several critical political, military and intelligence aspects of our forthcoming action against Libya. Before turning to the specific issues, it has become apparent that the problem posed by Qadhafi and the likelihood of his continued resort to terrorism poses a fundamental long-term security threat for the United States. We must therefore be ready to sustain military action against Qadhafi in the event that the forthcoming operation, while surely of a punishing nature, nonetheless proves indecisive. Given the fluid tactical balance of power in the central Mediterranean, it may be necessary for the United States to adjust its force posture in a flexible manner that ensures the presence of a significant force in being for a protracted period. It is important that all concerned recognize the scope of the resource requirements, over time, necessary to achieve our objectives.

As part of this adjustment, we need to decide how to maintain the required two-carrier presence in the Mediterranean. CORAL SEA will be extended for this operation but is near the end of her deployment and needs a replacement. Options include moving the Indian Ocean carrier -- either through Suez or the Cape of Good Hope -- or accelerating the deployment of an East Coast carrier.

Timing

There are diplomatic and operational reasons which argue for delaying the strikes until Monday night, April 14. In particular, you will be hosting Prime Minister Nakasone of Japan at Camp David on Saturday. On operational grounds, Defense needs additional time for planning the strikes.

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NLS F95-023/1 #553

By 224 NARA, Date 1/18/05

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Diplomatic

Secretary Shultz will present a proposed plan for consultations with key Allies. We have already asked Prime Minister Thatcher for approval to launch FB-111 strikes from bases in the UK. We should have HMG's answer by noon Wednesday. Related to this issue is the desirability of French approval for overflight by the FB-111's enroute to Libya -- although a longer route around Spain is available as a backup. A special military channel will be activated to make this request. However, you will need to decide whether to accept Secretary Shultz's recommendation to send General Walters to London, Rome, Paris, Bonn and the Hague.

Targetting

On Monday you directed that targets be selected which would be as costly to Qadhafi as possible without hurting those Libyan elements that may be prepared to work with us in the future. DOD is planning strikes against targets that play a key role both in maintaining Qadhafi in power and in directing terrorist operations abroad. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] in addition to previously agreed upon military targets. You should be aware that some of these targets pose a higher risk of collateral damage. We believe that the benefits of these targets far outweigh the risks. You should reaffirm this decision.

We also need to consider the next series of U.S. military actions in the event Qadhafi tries to either attack the Fleet or stimulate additional terrorism. While decisions do not need to be made at this meeting on those next steps, it is essential that the DOD have additional target sets -- military, political and economic -- ready in anticipation of various Libyan responses.

Intelligence

Bill Casey will discuss what intelligence information can be included in your address to the nation. Some thought is being given to verbatim reporting of the exchange of communications between the Berlin Peoples Bureau and Tripoli.

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As Amended

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RECOMMENDATION

OK NO

\_\_\_\_\_

That military action against Libya be conducted on Monday, April 14, 1986.

OK NO

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That you decide to dispatch General Walters to Europe as your special emissary.

OK NO

\_\_\_\_\_

That you reaffirm your decision of Monday to conduct strikes against targets which weaken Qadhafi's ability to stay in power and damage his international terrorist activities.

Prepared by:

Oliver L. North  
Howard R. Teicher  
James R. Stark

Attachment

Tab A Agenda

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AGENDA

Oval Office Discussion of Libya  
April 9, 1986  
9:30 a.m.

- I. Introduction Admiral Poindexter
- ° Carrier Deployments
- II. Timing Admiral Poindexter
- III. Diplomatic Situation Secretary Shultz
- ° Consultation Plan
  - ° Decision on General Walters
- IV. Military Situation Deputy Secretary Taft/Admiral Crowe
- ° Status of Targetting
- V. Intelligence Director Casey
- ° Public Release of Intelligence Information
  - ° [REDACTED]
- VI. Conclusion Admiral Poindexter

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NLS F96-023/1 #534  
By amy Date 1/18/05

## THEMES

### INTRODUCTION

- Only have about 15 minutes to reach decisions on timing and nature of U.S. action against Libya.
- As I consider this problem, clear that basic force posture adjustments will be necessary to sustain our capability to act against Libya.
- This could affect some of our commitments around the world and probably means the reallocation of resources to plan and support operations in the Mediterranean.
- In the short term we need to decide how to deploy and maintain a two-carrier presence in the Mediterranean.
- We also need to keep in mind whether we will use this opportunity to deal decisively with Qadhafi or whether to engage in escalating conventional American strikes and Libyan terrorism.

### TIMING

- Although we had hoped to act on Saturday night, for diplomatic and operational reasons, it now appears we need to wait until Monday.

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BY amf, NARA DATE 1/18/05

## DIPLOMATIC

-- George, please brief on your proposed plan for diplomatic consultation. Dispatch Walters?

-- What are key diplomatic problems you anticipate?

## MILITARY

-- Will/Bill to brief on the status of targetting.

-- President made clear on Monday importance of striking targets that would hurt Qadhafi as much as possible without undermining those who may work with us in the future.

-- Depending on Qadhafi's response, we need to be ready when we have levels of follow-on strikes against military, political, and economic targets.

## INTELLIGENCE

-- Bill, understand you are vetting intelligence for the President's use in his address.

-- Need as much verbatim text as possible.

-- What are prospects for political alternatives to Qadhafi should we get lucky.

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TALKING POINTS

Carrier Operations

- Whatever we do, CORAL SEA will have to be extended in the Mediterranean. The question is whether to move the ENTERPRISE from the Indian Ocean (either through the Suez Canal or around Cape of Good Hope) or wait for FORRESTAL to arrive from the U.S. in mid-June.
- o ENTERPRISE is 4-5 days steaming from the Suez Canal. This means she could not be in position for Saturday's strikes. She should, however, be moved to relieve CORAL SEA at some point.
  - o One alternative is to request Egypt's permission for Suez Canal transit on Thursday, April 10, simultaneous with an order for ENTERPRISE to steam toward the Canal. This would put her at Bab al-Mandeb on Saturday. News of ENTERPRISE's approach and its projected entry into the Mediterranean early next week could deceive Qadhafi as to the actual timing of U.S. strikes. It is doubtful that Egypt will agree to allow ENTERPRISE through the Canal. Moreover, a canal transit after the strikes, even in the unlikely event Egypt allows it, could cause major civil unrest.
  - o A second alternative is to assume Egypt would not grant permission for a transit and that the political costs to Mubarak of such a transit would be undesirable. In this case, ENTERPRISE would be ordered immediately to steam for the Mediterranean via the Cape of Good Hope. She would arrive at the end of April. If the issue is simply relief of CORAL SEA, this is a satisfactory solution. It does not, however, place any pressure on Egypt to support the U.S.
  - o The final option is to leave ENTERPRISE in the Indian Ocean. This requires a much longer extension of CORAL SEA's deployment and limits our flexibility of response. It keeps a strong U.S. presence in the Indian Ocean without demanding our friends in the region, such as Oman, to step up to their own responsibilities in assisting with the U.S. presence, i.e., providing facilities for U.S. land-based air in the absence of the carrier.

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-- The NSC staff believes that Option 2 -- ordering ENTERPRISE to immediately commence a transit via the Cape of Good Hope -- is the best alternative.

-- Assuming he survives, Qadhafi's reaction to our strikes may be limited to a terror campaign or be widened to a conventional attack against the Fleet.

- Qadhafi will probably assume we have begun a decisive attack to destroy him and the infrastructure which keeps him in power.
- While his (and the Libyan military's) performance at Sidra suggests he won't attack the Fleet, believing it's the end may induce him to try to destroy as much U.S. naval power as possible, he may think he could achieve some political victory or perhaps buy some time.

- E. O. 12958  
As Amended  
Sec. 3.3(b)(5)

- o The Navy must be ready to take these next steps.
- o If Qadhafi attacks immediately after our strikes, will the battle group be able to defend itself, especially against "suicide" aircraft, and then launch more strikes?
- o If Libya's military remains passive, but Qadhafi continues terrorist attacks against the U.S., then the follow-on targets should be economic and political.

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